

The Pool of Flame



By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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O'Rourke likewise surveyed his surroundings in two brief glances: and was contented to find that they were alone, or as much alone as two can be upon a steamship. For they were, after all, well matched; and one of them he knew to be armed. Shifting in his chair so that his revolver lay convenient to his hand, as De Hyeres approached the Irishman removed his cigar from between his teeth, flicked away an inch of ash and silently proffered it in the prescribed fashion.

The Frenchman accepted the courtesy with a bow, applied the fire to his cigarette, inhaled deeply and returned the cigar with a formal phrase of thanks. He lingered for a moment, puffing and gazing off over the black, starlit expanse of the Bay of Bengal, lonely to its dim and far horizon, then observed quietly: "I am not mistaken, I believe, in understanding I have the honor to address Monsieur le Colonel O'Rourke, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour?"

"You are not mistaken, monsieur," returned O'Rourke pleasantly, then with the directness which he sometimes found useful, watching the man closely as he spoke: "And I believe it is my pleasure to recognize Monsieur Le Vicomte des Trebes?"

"Des Trebes, monsieur?" The Frenchman's look of wonder was beyond criticism and there was no least trace of discomfiture to be detected in his manner. "But no. You are under a mistake. I am merely a French gentleman without a title; Raoul de Hyeres is my name."

"Ah!" said the wanderer. "Twas the resemblance misled me. Pardon, monsieur."

"Granted, my dear sir. . . Des Trebes? The name has a familiar sound. Do I not remember reading somewhere that the Vicomte des Trebes died last spring? In Tunis, was it? . . . Suddenly, I believe."

"Is it so?" said O'Rourke drily. "Possibly. The adventurer lived in the manner of those who meet with sudden deaths."

The subject languished, and after a few more noncommittal observations De Hyeres wandered off, presumably in search of the English girl, to whom he had been paying assiduous attention.

On closer scrutiny, she had proved to be a remarkably pretty girl; although, in point of fact, O'Rourke, for all that he admired her looks immensely, had purposely avoided her. This he did from motives of prudence; he mistrusted the combination formed by De Hyeres and the girl. The latter might be all that she looked and claimed to be: a sweet, wholesome and rather ingenuous young Englishwoman, an orphan, resident in Rangoon in the household of an uncle, to whom she was returning after a visit with friends in Simla. On the passenger list her name stood as Emilia Pynsent. But the adventurer felt it the course of wisdom to deny himself the pleasure of her acquaintance, so long as she permitted the attentions of the Frenchman.

Altogether, considering the hot weather and such self-imposed restrictions, O'Rourke considered the voyage hardly a success from a social point of view. He kept pretty much to himself and to Danny, and to make assurance doubly sure he instituted a new regime with regard to the Pool of Flame: that jewel never left his stateroom. When O'Rourke was on deck or at meals, Danny sat behind bolts, alert and under arms, and vice versa. By night they stood regular watches together, the one on guard while the other slept. Clearly the adventurer was determined that no lack of safeguards on his part should again deprive him of the ruby.

But it's no easy matter to avoid meeting any particular person on a ship with a small saloon list, unless one is willing to be purposely rude and discourteous. For all his wariness the Irishman was to carry with him a personal impression of Miss Pynsent.

On the last day of the passage, toward evening, the Poonah raised the coast of Burma; by dark she was steaming steadily southwards along the littoral, heading for the delta of the Irrawaddy.

A still, bright night with little wind: O'Rourke was not one to resist its allure. Four bells saw him lounging at the rail below the bridge, staring hungrily over toward the land. It was in his mind that another twelve hours or so would see him relieved of his trust; and as the time drew nigh impatience burned hotly within him; he had become full weary of the Pool of Flame and was anxious to be free of the thing, to have its chapter in his history closed forever.

Far over the water a white and flashing light lifted up and caught his eye, a nameless beacon bright against the darkness at the base of the Arakan hills, guardian of the perils of those shallow seas. And simultane-

ously he became conscious of a presence at his elbow; as he turned sharply the English girl addressed him in a voice sweet-toned and quiet.

"What is that light, if you please, Colonel O'Rourke?"

"Faith, that I can't say, Miss Pynsent."

Her eyes flashed a laugh upon him in the gloom. "Then you know my name?"

"Even as yourself knew mine. 'Twould be strange otherwise, with our ship's company so small."

"But I," she returned, animated, "am such an insignificant person—while you are the Colonel O'Rourke."

"Ye do me an honor I'm not deserving, Miss Pynsent, but 'tis proud I am entirely that a humble soldier of fortune should be known to ye by reputation."

"Oh, I've grown quite weary of your fame, Colonel O'Rourke," she coun-



The Frenchman Accepted the Courtesy With a Bow.

tered with a trace of laughing impudence. "Hardly anything has interested Monsieur De Hyeres, these past few days, save anecdotes of your exploits."

"'Tis kind of him, to be sure. I must cultivate his acquaintance and learn from him to know myself, I see."

If she detected the irony she overlooked or failed to understand it. "He's very entertaining," she commented, pleasantly. "But then most Frenchmen are, don't you think? I hope to see much of him in Rangoon."

"So he's landing there, too?"

"I believe so. And you, Colonel O'Rourke?"

"I may have to wait over until the next steamer," he admitted warily.

"I sympathize heartily with your disgust at the prospect," laughed the girl.

"Eh? And why? 'Tis a land of fair repute for climate and beauty."

"Ah, but I live in Burma, you see, and so have come to know it far too well. But that's the way with all expatriates, isn't it—to hate their homes so far from home?"

"Must ye endure it, then, Miss Pynsent?"

"An orphan has little choice. It seems my kismet to abide in Rangoon forever and a day. You see, my only living relative is an uncle, Mr. Lansdowne Sypher, and he's got no one else to keep house for him."

"Lansdowne Sypher. . . ?"

The ejaculation sprang to O'Rourke's lips before he could restrain it.

"Yes. Do you know him? He's the junior, you know, of the firm of Secretan and Sypher."

"Solicitors, are they not? . . . No; 'tis me misfortune not to know your uncle. But the name of his firm I've heard."

The genial nature of the Irishman, which had insensibly warmed to the girl's charm, withdrew abruptly, for to tell-like, into a shell of reserve. The element of coincidence had again entered into his affairs, and he had learned a bitter lesson from experience—to distrust coincidence on general principles. "There's naught so common in life as coincidences," he philosophized, "and be the same token naught so dangerous."

For which reason he invented an early excuse to terminate the conversation, and ungallantly withdrew to the seclusion of his stateroom, where he passed a night that seemed interminable; for he lay long in a wakeful panic of imagination, scheming out a hundred stratagems whereby he might confuse as many possible attempts to prevent the due and safe delivery of the Pool of Flame into the hands of Mr. Lansdowne Sypher.

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Toward the close of the following day the Poonah dropped anchor in the river roadstead off Rangoon; and with in the ensuing hour her passengers had deserted her, De Hyeres and Miss Pynsent in their van, O'Rourke among the last to leave. And nothing hindered him, not the least hitch delayed his disembarkation. It was curious, it was incredible, it was disturbing. He took away with him no ease of mind whatever.

There were tikkagharries waiting, and without a breath's delay the adventurer and his servant climbed into the nearest and desired to be conveyed to the offices of Messrs. Secretan and Sypher. The vehicle whirled them swiftly away and into the main-traveled way of Rangoon, Mogul street.

In front of a structure of stone and iron so palpably an office building that it might have been transplanted to the Strand without exciting comment—save for the spotless cleanliness of it—their tikkagharry drew up.

The gnarriwallah indicated the offices of Messrs. Secretan and Sypher, one flight up—and named his fare. O'Rourke paid him and alighted, with Danny at his heels and his heart yearning to choke him. The hour of fulfillment was at hand—and all was well! He who had faced death in a hundred shapes of terror, unflinching, found himself in a flutter of nerves that would have disgraced a school-girl.

He dodged into the building, took the steps three at a stride. . . . and suddenly found himself in the presence of, more than that, closeted with the man to meet whom he had crossed half the world at peril of his life: Mr. Lansdowne Sypher.

"Colonel O'Rourke?" Sypher's manner was very cordial. "I'm glad to see you. You are within your time, yet I had begun to despair of you. Be seated." He indicated a chair beside his desk. "And permit me; you of all men will appreciate the precaution."

He laughed and went to the windows, adjusting the wooden shades in such a manner that the light was tempered and no portion of the room could be visible to anyone spying from a window in one of the adjacent buildings. The he turned and smiled cheerfully at the stupefied adventurer.

"I have it here," said O'Rourke; "safe be the mercy of several highly potential saints!" He laughed uneasily, fumbling in his breast pocket. "There it is," said he, tossing the stone in its chamois covering upon the solicitor's desk.

Sypher himself betrayed some evidences of nervousness as he sat forward and lifted the case by its leathern thongs. He let it dangle before him for an instant, watching it with a curious, speculative smile. . . .

"Well," he said, "really. . . . And after a pause: 'I congratulate you, Colonel O'Rourke. And I admire you immensely. . . . You see, when this commission was offered us, I considered seriously the project of going in search of you in person and bringing the stone back to Rangoon myself. But then—although I'm not really a timorous man—I knew the circumstances so well—I feared I should never reach Rangoon alive. Yes! He thrust a hand into his waistcoat pocket and produced a penknife, with which he began to slit the stitches that enclosed the ruby."

"You've been wondering, no doubt, why so enormous a reward was offered. . . ."

"I have that," assented O'Rourke.

"It was partly because of the danger," said Sypher, intent upon his occupation. "You know, these Burmese are a curiously pious folk; when one of them grows rich he employs the major part of his fortune in building a temple—or in some such work. This particular gentleman—a very wealthy merchant—chose to give half of what he had to the restoration of the Pool of Flame to the Buddha from which it was originally stolen. But he, too,

was afraid. He's superstitious about the stone—believes it bad luck to touch it so long as it remains away from its Buddha. So he came to us. . . . I myself am not superstitious, but . . ."

He ceased to speak abruptly, for the Pool of Flame lay naked, a blinding marvel, in the hollow of his palm. O'Rourke heard him gasp and was conscious of his hastened respiration. Watching the man intently, he saw a strange shade of pallor color his face.

"'Tis meself," said the adventurer, "that's no more superstitious than ye, sir. Yet I'm willing to confess I'm glad the thing's out of me hands at last."

Sypher seemed to recollect himself as one coming out of a state of stupor. He stood up and buttoned the ruby carefully into a pocket of his trousers. "Come," he said crisply. "Let us step across the street to the bank. The money's there for you, sir—the reward."



The Pool of Flame Lay Naked in His Palm.

Back in his stateroom on the Poonah, O'Rourke threw himself into the lower berth and lay there, a forearm flung across his eyes, thinking excitedly, disturbed by formless forebodings.

Beside him Danny was packing indistinctly, with now and again a pause during which he would stand reflective, his gaze fixed upon his employer's face, a little puzzled and perplexed.

The Poonah was pausing overnight to discharge and take aboard cargo; for this reason O'Rourke in his haste to get ashore had not delayed to take

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His luggage with him. . . . On deck, fore and aft donkey engines were puffing and chugging and chain tackles rattling as they lifted freight to and from the hold and the lighters alongside.

Abruptly, without moving, O'Rourke spoke. "I'll want evening clothes, Danny," said he. "'Tis dining I am tonight with Mr. Straker and his niece, Miss Pynsent, who came with us from Diamond Harbor. 'Twill save a bit of bother to dress before I go ashore."

"Aw-w," said Danny, assmiling. . . . "And the missus?" he said suddenly, some minutes later. "Madam O'Rourke, sor. Did ye get no word from her?"

"For what else would I be driving to every hotel in the town after leaving Mr. Sypher, Danny, but to inquire for her? She's not here; but she'll come, be sure. She's still got several days—three or four—in which to keep our trust. 'Tis discontented I am not to find her waiting for me, but I'm satisfied entirely she'll keep faith."

"And," insisted Danny eagerly—"beggin' yer honor's pardon—but what will ye have to tell her, sor?"

O'Rourke sat up. "Have to tell her? What d'ye mean?"

"I mean, sor, I'm dyin' wid the wish to know how ut's all turned out. Plase, yer honor, won't ye be tellin' me? Is ut—is ut all right?"

"Bless your heart, Danny!" laughed O'Rourke. "'Tis so dazed I've been that I never thought to tell ye—thinkin' all the time that ye knew. 'Tis all right, indeed, me boy. The Pool of Flame's in Mr. Sypher's keeping and the money's in mine—in the bank, Danny, payable to me order. Think of it—one hundred thousand pounds of real money, and all me own. 'Tis ridiculous, 'tis absurd. 'Tis meself hardly credits the truth of it all; yet I was there—saw the man, gave him the jewel, went to the bank with him and for the space of five minutes sat at a table, with all that money before me, counting it over, bill by bill, a square hundred of them, each for a thousand pounds, guaranteed by the Bank of England! . . . Think of that—all that belonging to me—to me, O'Rourke!"

"Thank God!" breathed Danny devotedly. "But did ye 'larn nothin' about the stone?"

"Little enough, Danny—only a part of the meaning of the whole devilish business; the rest I'm to know tonight. Mr. Sypher 'll be tellin' me after we've dined; he wants to hear me own end of the story, too."

Sypher had very explicitly named his dinner hour, after the formal English fashion, nowhere and by nobody more rigidly observed than by the Englishman in the Orient; "eight for eight-thirty," he had said. And as O'Rourke, a very dignified and imposing O'Rourke in his evening dress, waited for a sampan on the lower grating of the Poonah's passenger gangplank he had a round three-quarters for an hour for leeway—ample leisure for an interested inspection of that part of Rangoon lying between the floating jetty and Sypher's residence in a suburb near Dalhousie Park.

Danny remained aboard ship only temporarily, being instructed to follow with O'Rourke's belongings to suitable accommodations already engaged at a hotel on the Strand, overlooking the roadstead; from whose windows O'Rourke was promising himself the pleasure of watching the arrival of the steamship bearing his wife to his arms.

"Bless her dear face!" said he softly. "'Tis meself will be desolated if she's not aboard that Messageries boat due tomorrow—now that I can go back to her, a man of property, no longer a pauper ne'er-do-well! Think of that, ye lucky dog!"

A sampan slid noiselessly in beside the grating. O'Rourke let himself cautiously into it and incontinently collapsed upon the rear seat as the boat slid away toward the shore lights, yielding to the vigorous sweeps of the single long oar wielded by the Burman in the bows.

Ashore, a tikkagharry caught him up and bore him down the silent road that winds between the Strand and the river's edge, then whipped into Mogul street, where the fluent tide of life ran broad and deep beneath a glare of light.

All too quickly the tikkagharry whisked out of the main channel of the city's life, out beyond the Mohammedan mosque and the Chett's hall and the Christian chapel, and into the soft, dense night of the countryside—a world of darkness sparsely studded with dim, glowing windows; and all too soon, again, it swung off from the highway into a private drive, crunched over gravel and stopped before the illuminated veranda of a native bungalow.

O'Rourke got down, discharged the driver and ascended the steps, a little puzzled to find no one waiting to welcome him, whether Sypher, Miss Pynsent, or at worst a servant. Surely he was expected. . . . But nobody appeared. The grating rires of the departing tikkagharry had made noise enough to apprise the household of the arrival of a guest, one would think. Nevertheless O'Rourke remained ungreeted.

He stroked his chin, perplexed, wondering if by mischance the native driver had brought him to the wrong bungalow. But it was now too late to call him back and make sure. And this verandah, still and empty as it was, softly lighted by lanterns dependent from its roof, was to him a small oasis in a world of darkness. Without advice he was lost, could find his way no other where. He would have simply to wait until the household came to life, or until by his own

efforts he succeeded in quickening it. He tried to do this latter to the best of his ability by tapping a summons on the door-jamb. Through the wire insect-screens a broad hallway and a staircase rising to the upper floor were visible. Limp, cool-looking rugs conceived in pleasing color-schemes protected the hardwood flooring. To the right a door stood ajar and permitted a broad shaft of light to escape from the room beyond. On the other hand a similar door, likewise open, showed a dimmer glow. Two other doors were closed; O'Rourke assumed that they led to the kitchen offices.

[Continued in our Next]

The Trials of a Traveler.

"I am a traveling salesman," writes E. E. Youngs, E. Berkshire, Vt., "and was often troubled with constipation and indigestion till I began to use Dr. King's New Life Pills, which I have found an excellent remedy." For all stomach, liver or kidney troubles they are unequalled. Only 25 cents at Oberdorfer's.

FOR RENT.

I have for rent or will lease for a term of years the best livery and sale barn in Paris, Kentucky. Situated corner Second and Main streets, opposite Windsor Hotel, possession given Jan. 1, 1912. E. T. P. Hone 198.

J. H. BUTLER, Paris, Ky.

12 tf

Are Ever at War.

There are two things everlastingly at war, joy and piles. But Bucklen's Arnica Salve will banish piles in any form. It soon subdues the itching, irritation, inflammation or swelling. It gives comfort, invites joy. Great healer of burns, boils, ulcers, cuts, bruises, eczema, scalds, pimples, skin eruptions. Only 25c at Oberdorfer's.

Only the Belief of Snobs.

The idea that trade is vulgar is one of the silliest ideas that ever came into the brain of man.

Then Mr. Knagg Felt Better.

Mrs. Knagg—Perhaps you recall, it was on a train we first met. Mr. Knagg—Yes, but it's too late now to sue the company for damages.

Flying Men Fall

victims to stomach, liver and kidney troubles just like other people with like results in loss of appetite, backache, nervousness, headache and tired listless, rundown feeling. But there's no need to feel like that as T. D. Peebles, Henry, Tenn., proved. "Six bottles of Electric Bitters," he writes "did more to give me new strength and good appetite than all other remedies I used." So they help other people. Its folly to suffer when this great remedy will help you from the first dose. Try it. Only 50 cents at Oberdorfer's.



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have stood for true

economy to the man

of moderate means;

and to the man of

wealth, the best that

money could buy. We

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Paris.

Our new Fall line in all leathers—
Patent Colt, Russia Calf and Gun
Metal, now ready for inspection.

Geo. M'Williams,

L. & N. TIME-TAEBL

IN EFFECT JAN 14, 1911. AT 11:59 P. M.

Trains Arrive

No.	FROM	
34	Atlanta, Ga., Daily	5:31 am
134	Lexington, Ky., Daily	4:34 am
29	Cynthiana, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	7:35 am
7	Maysville, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	7:38 am
10	Rowland, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	7:55 am
40	Lexington, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	8:12 am
37	Cincinnati, O., Daily	9:50 am
3	Maysville, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	10:20 am
12	Lexington, Ky., Daily	10:15 am
33	Cincinnati, O., Daily	10:24 am
26	Lexington, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	12:00 am
25	Cynthiana, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	3:10 pm
9	Maysville, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	3:15 pm
138	Lexington, Ky., Daily	3:34 pm
38	Knoxville, Tenn., Daily	3:25 pm
5	Maysville, Ky., Daily	5:25 pm
39	Cincinnati, O., Daily Except Sunday	5:40 pm
30	Lexington, Ky., Daily	6:03 pm
8	Louisville & Frankfort, Daily Except Sunday	6:03 am
32	Jacksonville, Fla., Daily	6:05 pm
14	Lexington, Ky., Daily	10:45 pm
31	Cincinnati, O., Daily	10:50 pm

Trains Depart

No.	TO	
34	Cincinnati, O., Daily	5:28 am
4	Maysville, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	5:35 am
29	Lexington, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	7:47 am
40	Cincinnati, O., Daily Except Sunday	8:20 am
10	Maysville, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	8:20 am
137	Lexington, Ky., Daily	9:57 am
37	Knoxville, Tenn., Daily	9:55 am
33	Jacksonville, Fla., Daily	10:24 am
133	Lexington, Ky., Daily	10:27 am
6	Maysville, K., Daily	12:05 pm
26	Cynthiana, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	12:04 am
25	Lexington, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	3:34 pm
38	Cincinnati, O., Daily	3:40 pm
9	Rowland, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	5:57 pm
39	Lexington, Ky., Daily	6:10 pm
32	Cincinnati, O., Daily	6:15 pm
13	Maysville, Ky., Daily	6:15 pm
30	Cynthiana, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	6:25 pm
31	Lexington, Ky., Daily	10:55 pm
13	Atlanta, Ga., Daily	10:57 p

F. & C. TIME-TABLE

IN EFFECT OCTOBER. 3. 1911.

Trains Arrive

No.	FROM	
2	Frankfort, Ky., Daily Except Sunda	8:13 am
4	Frankfort, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	3:40 pm
9	Louisville & Frankfort, Daily Except Sunday	5:50 pm
162	Louisville & Frankfort, Sunday Only	10:00 pm

Trains Depart

No.	TO	
161	Frankfort & Louisville, Sunday Only	7:10 am
7	Frankfort & Louisville, Daily Except Sunday	7:43 am
1	Frankfort, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	9:53 am
3	Frankfort, Ky., Daily Except Sunday	5:53 pm